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DE RUEHDS #0354/01 0401612

ZNY CCCCC ZZH

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FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3714

INFO RUEHZO/AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE

RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 0502

RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS 3255

RUEHRB/AMEMBASSY RABAT 0911

RUZEFAA/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ADDIS ABABA 000354

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/FO, AF/RSA, AF/SPG, AF/W, AF/E, AF/C, AND
IO/UNP

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/09/2019

TAGS: PREL PGOV FR XA AU

SUBJECT: AU SUMMIT -- AF ACTING A/S CARTER MEETS WITH
FRENCH DELEGATION

Classified By: AMBASSADOR DONALD YAMAMOTO, REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶11. (C) Summary: AF Acting Assistant Secretary met with French Ministry of Foreign Affairs AF A/S-Equivalent Stephane Gompertz, Presidential Advisor for African Affairs Remi Marechaux, and Ambassador Jean-Christophe Belliard February 2 on the margins of the African Union Summit. On Sudan, the French were surprised at the pressure the USG was receiving from the AU and African states to support an Article XVI deferral of the International Criminal Court indictment of Sudanese President Bashir. The discussion revealed differences of opinion within the French government on whether to hold a hard line on the Mauritanian coup. France asked for U.S. help with Guinean elections, and Carter said we would send a representative to the Contact Group meeting scheduled for February 16, in Conakry. France is increasingly worried about developments which threaten democracy in Senegal. On Madagascar, France is looking into the possibility of identifying a mediator. The two sides shared a similar view on the situations in the Eastern Congo and Zimbabwe. End Summary.

DARFUR

¶12. (C) Speaking about the situation in the South Darfur town of Muhajariya, Gompertz said that it was good that the Nigerian UNAMID troops had been ordered to stay in place, noting that it would have been much worse had UNAMID accepted the Government of Sudan's instructions to depart. Gompertz wondered if Sudan was anxious to attack the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) forces in town because it felt it needed to score a victory in advance of the International Criminal Court (ICC) issuance of the arrest warrant for President Bashir. Belliard opined that JEM is trying to establish itself as the representative of the rebels prior to the Doha negotiations. Gompertz pointed out that the Government lost in the last round of fighting with JEM. Carter said that JEM had told the USG that it was ready for a fight, a possible allusion to anti-aircraft guns. It is likely to be a bloody stalemate.

¶13. (C) Carter said the USG is doing what it can to prevent hostilities, including demarches both to the GOS and to JEM, issuing a statement condemning the JEM provocation and the GOS bombings, and gearing up for a UN Security Council Presidential Statement. He said that the Egyptian Minister for Cooperation had rebuffed his request that Egypt urge Sudan to take a pause in fighting and to negotiate, countering that the USG should first offer a carrot to Sudan in the form of support for a UNSC Article XVI deferral of the ICC indictment. When asked if Gompertz or Marechaux had

received similar pressure from AU member states or from the AU Commission, they said "aside from a half-hearted attempt in Paris by the Qatari Minister of Foreign Affairs, not a word," and were bemused to hear that Carter had received such a barrage of diplomatic overtures and entreaties on Sudan's behalf. Belliard noted Sudanese Foreign Minister Deng Alor had twice refused to take the floor today in the AU plenary to defend Sudan regarding the ICC indictment: "the Sudan Peoples, Liberation Movement is not against this," he said.

¶4. (C) Carter said Chadian Foreign Minister Faki had just minutes ago refused his request to issue a statement calling on JEM to withdraw from Muhajariya. Belliard was not surprised, saying Chadian President Deby could not show weakness in the face of rebels threatening his own regime, in particular Timan Erdimi. At Carter's request, Gompertz agreed to contact Deby to ask him directly to urge JEM to leave the town. Shortley proposed France seek to use the African members of the Dakar Agreement Contact Group, which facilitated a peace agreement between Chad and Sudan in March 2008, to call for an end to hostilities. France took this on board, and suggested it may be worthwhile speaking to Libya as well. Carter pointed out that the efforts were worthwhile, but could possibly be ex post, as Sudan's 24-hour ultimatum had already passed.

MAURITANIA AND GUINEA

¶5. (C) Turning to Mauritania, Carter noted that the USG is sticking to the message that Aziz must step down and reinstate the constitutionally elected President before any elections could be envisioned. Carter said pressure on coup

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leader Aziz is increasing. Gompertz said: "Do you think so? I am not so sure I would be so optimistic." Marechaux intervened, saying France has given essentially the same message as the United States. Representing their different views on the coup, Gompertz and Marechaux jockeyed for position, the former defending a softer line and the latter a more firm opposition. (Note: This apparent tension is also reflected in Embassy Paris reporting on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, realpolitik vis a vis Africa, compared with the Presidency's championing of democracy. End Note.)

¶6. (C) On Guinea, Carter left no ambiguity on where the USG stood, saying we have to exert maximum pressure on the junta. He said the international community should push for parliamentary elections as soon as possible, have the junta step aside, and then take up to a year to prepare for presidential elections, with a constitutionally elected parliament ruling the country in the interim. In response to a question from Gompertz as to what kind of pressure the USG had in mind, Carter mentioned travel sanctions. Marechaux pointed out that the Contact Group (established the preceding day) wanted to create a roadmap which includes lifting the ban on political party and labor union activity, extracting a commitment from the junta that they will not stand for elections, and halting arbitrary detentions. Marechaux said the Contact Group has identified a six million euro gap in elections funding needs. The next meeting of the group will be held in Conakry, on February 16.

SENEGAL

¶7. (C) Marechaux said France is extremely worried about Senegal. President Wade thinks he is smarter than everyone else, does not communicate with his French advisors or anyone else, and regularly pulls all-nighters during which he comes up with expensive new schemes he seeks to finance off budget.

In mid-December, France had to extend him a 125 million euro loan to prevent Senegal from going bankrupt, but indications are that the country is nearing bankruptcy again. President Sarkozy wrote to Wade telling him to get his act together, but the French are skeptical it will do any good. The next IMF review is scheduled for June, and France will be unable to come to the rescue again. Carter agreed with Gompertz and Marechaux that demonstrations inspired by non-indigenous

imams was worrisome. Marechaux said a test will be upcoming municipal elections -- if the opposition is prevented from scoring gains, it could mean trouble for a country which once prided itself as a flagship of African democracy.

MADAGASCAR

¶8. (C) Turning to Madagascar, Carter said neither of the principal antagonists -- the President and the Mayor of Antananarivo -- are listening. One approach would be to suggest to President Ravalomanana to announce he will not run again, and then build support allowing him to remain in office for the remaining two and a half years, addressing the socio-economic problems the country faces, and allow the political process to develop for the next elections.

Marechaux who, prior to joining the French Presidential staff was the DAS-Equivalent responsible for Madagascar, offered that was one solution. He emphasized France had two red lines: no extra-constitutional solution and no return to the status quo. He said France is looking into the possibility of engaging a mediator, possibly a senior politician from Mauritius or Mozambique. Carter agreed that the USG would not accept an extra-constitutional change of government and that the status quo was not an equilibrium for the country.

EASTERN CONGO

¶9. (C) On Eastern Congo, both agreed that the situation had improved, virtually overnight. Carter said he had told Rwandan Foreign Minister Rosemary Museminali earlier in the day that Rwanda should minimize civilian casualties in joint security operations with the Armed Forces of the DRC (FARDC), and should not overstay their welcome. Carter said the USG is trying to push for a political solution under the auspices of UN mediator Obasanjo and AU mediator Mkapa. He said Rwandan President Kagame appears to want to move away from a permanent security posture to focusing on the economics, hoping to turn Rwanda into a Central African variant of Singapore. For the time being, at least, DRC President Kabila seems interested in the potential of allowing Eastern Congo to come into the sphere of Rwanda's economic growth,

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so long as the region remains an integral part of the DRC. Carter said the Achilles Heel is the FARDC. He asked for cooperation from France and the European Union on security sector transformation -- reform is too weak a word for the task at hand.

ZIMBABWE

¶10. (C) Gompertz asked about Zimbabwe. Carter said the international community needs to be vigilant and continue to monitor developments in the wake of the Mugabe-Tsvangirai agreement. The USG wants to see actions on the ground that reflect true implementation of the agreement before we will lift sanctions or reengage economically with the Government of Zimbabwe. We will continue to provide humanitarian assistance, insisting on controls and accountability. He said that AU officials had told him they were going to give the agreement six months and then evaluate how it is progressing. Gompertz said a priority for Foreign Minister Kouchner is humanitarian access for medical relief workers and the freeing of political prisoners. Carter said that a medical group had sounded the alarm that the health system had deteriorated to such a state that those being treated for communicable diseases were not keeping up with their medication, and the risk of a pandemic of drug-resistant strains of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and other diseases had risen to nightmarish.

YAMAMOTO